



NEWS RELEASE

Provincial Government Still Leaving Cattle Producers ‘Stranded’

July 26, 2010 (WINNIPEG, MB) – The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association says the cattle producers of Manitoba are still waiting. “We have yet to hear from the province if any support will be coming our way,” said Major Jay Fox, President of the MCPA. According to the MCPA President and its Directors, due to the extreme moisture and flooding conditions endured thus far, it is now clearly evident that this is a year of devastation for many Manitoba producers. “Producers in many regions of this province are suffering through some of the most severe flooding conditions seen to date,” said Fox. “We have producers in disastrous situations, yet there has been no assistance or relief package forthcoming, such has been extended to the grain industry.”

Why assistance has not yet been extended to the cattle industry has left many producers frustrated. “The message seems to apparently be that the same attention and protocols do not apply to cattle, as they do to the grain industry,” said District 13 Director, Kim Crandall.

In a recent meeting with Manitoba’s Minister of Agriculture, MCPA stressed the need for equivalent options such as made available to grain producers. On July 8th, 2010, the Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan governments announced that \$450million will be available for producers to receive \$30 per acre to protect and restore damaged cropland. “Our cattle producers have been dealt the same card by mother nature as the grain guys,” said Trevor Atchison, District 6 Director. “Yet they have received assistance, and we have not.” Manitoba cattle producers are again, for the second year in a row, facing a possible shortage in hay and feed supplies due to this year’s flooding conditions.

As a result of inaction, the MCPA has put forth a proposal, requesting from the Manitoba government equal support in the form of financial assistance that has been provided to the grain farmers. MCPA has requested a per head payment for breeding and feeder stock to help offset the challenges of loss of pasture and hay land, as well as a per acre payment for the re-establishment of damaged forage stands, as well as other options that will help out the producers in our province.

The MCPA has also requested the government create a Freight Assistance Program. Producers will be forced to haul feed from distances, in order to obtain enough feed inventory, creating additional costs. The Government of Manitoba continues to take a “wait and see approach”. District 10 Director, Theresa Zuk says many of the producers in her area are ‘outraged’ by the lack of a timely response for support for cattle producers. “Leaving our producers waiting shows just how little the government understands about the troubles facing our producers in this province. Far from giving much needed support for our guys, the government seems to be burying its head in the sand and thinking that the issue will simply go away!”

In spite of this lack of acceptable response to date, the MCPA continues to stress the importance of having a program ready and in place in the event of hay and feed shortages this autumn.

The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association has also heard the concerns of producers around the Shoal lake area regarding flooding and poor drainage systems. "In our discussions with the Provincial Government we have asked for long-term commitments to ensure drains are maintained to control the damage to properties adjacent to drainage systems," says Fox.

As the end of summer approaches, MCPA is calling on the government to strongly consider their needs. The MCPA urges the Province of Manitoba to move quickly and have these programs ready and in place so that producers have these options immediately available should they continue to experience heavy rains and wet weather conditions that will result in hay and feed shortages.

"The cattle industry is in dire need," says Fox. "We have a shrinking cattle population in this province and that should not only be of great concern to us, but the ramifications of which should be of great concern to government as well." The province's cow herd has experienced its fifth consecutive yearly decline. "We need to address the barriers to the future strength of the industry and right now we must get the support that we need to regain sustainability on the landscape. We need to engage younger producers into farming and ranching, but for every producer that goes out of business, there is not another one starting up. The future of this industry depends on sustaining farms and ranchers for the younger generations."

In the meantime, MCPA continues to compel the province to equally consider our cattle producers. "We have been in regular, continual communication with our Minister of Agriculture," said Fox. "Minister Struthers has indicated that he will continue to monitor and assess the situation, review our proposal and get back to us. But our cattle guys are still left hanging – and there's not much left to hang on to."

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The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association is the exclusive voice of the cattle industry in Manitoba through communication, advocacy, research and education within industry and to government, consumers and others, to improve prosperity and ensure a sustainable future. The Association represents 10,000 cattle producers across the province.

For Further Information Contact:

Major Jay Fox
President, MCPA
Phone: 204.447.0120